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THE PROFIT OF COLLECTING.



HERE is conceded to be much pleasure in collecting rare books, fine paintings, old coins, and other treasures, but it is not so generally perceived that such collecting is often a cheap pleasure and very profitable to the collector himself in some instances, and, more frequently, to his heirs. W. J. Loftie,

an English art writer, gives some curious examples of this. For instance, the late Mr. Gillott, the steel-pen maker of Birmingham, was a famous collector of paintings. He began, as soon as he had the money, to buy a picture or two every year from some rising artist. He trusted, it is said, his own judgment, which implies that he had judgment to trust. He enjoyed the possession of the pictures very much. They were a constant source of intense pleasure to him. He was rather an illiterate man, not having had the advantages of education in his youth.

His great resource was in his picture gallery, and it was a cheap pleasure. The fact is, it cost nothing. When it was dispersed, after his death, there were not wanting people to assert that the increase in the value of the pictures since they were painted was such as to bring in to Mr. Gillott's heirs a sum equal to the aggregate produce at 20 per cent per annum of all the money he spent. And it is curious further to observe that the pictures which Mr. Gillott had bought at the highest prices fetched less at his

sale than those he had given the least money for. The Ettys, the Maclises, the Wilsons, which formed, as he probably thought, the great features of his gallery, fetched nothing in comparison with the Turner water-colors and the Müllers, for which comparatively he had given very little.

But let us take a less prominent case, as more illustrative of the position, that collecting may be a cheap pleasure. A man with a taste for early printed books, and with a knowledge of the history of the art, goes into an auction room or a bookseller's every now and then as he passes by on his daily road to business. Sometimes he sees a rare book going for a low price, and he buys it. More often he has to be content while others buy who are wealthier, but he learns something regarding the comparative value and rarity of particular books. He derives a vast amount of enjoyment from his pursuit. He meets intellectual men on common ground. He has a little wholesome excitement now and then at a sale. And he has the quiet pleasure of collating his treasures of an evening, of mending them, of binding them, perhaps of making one perfect whole from several fragments. He learns a great deal, and that too of a useful kind, and though he often has

to walk or go in the omnibus rather than take a cab, he does not mind it. The taste, the consciousness that he has something behind the daily routine of business life, is worth much to him, and meanwhile he is steadily gathering a collection. All those cab drives he does not take, all those newspapers and magazines he does not buy, all those cigars he does not smoke, all those club luncheons he does not eat, all those coats, hats, hose, and other garments he does as well without, have gone to increase the collection. Had he bought all these things he would have none of them to leave; but the mere chips and parings of ordinary life have given him enough to form a good, if a small, collection, and at his death, or before it, they are sold for such a sum as will materially add to the resources of his family. This all goes to show that a very small expenditure on worthy objects of art is both good and pleasant in itself, and also a prudent piece of economy. Let us take one more example from Mr. Loftie's experience. The facts of it, he says, are true, but one or two particulars, of no importance to the matter in hand, are varied, as many of the actors in the story are still alive.

About forty years ago, an English country baronet of moderate wealth married for the second time. His

belonged to the same class as the lady herself, their testimony was not thereby invalidated.

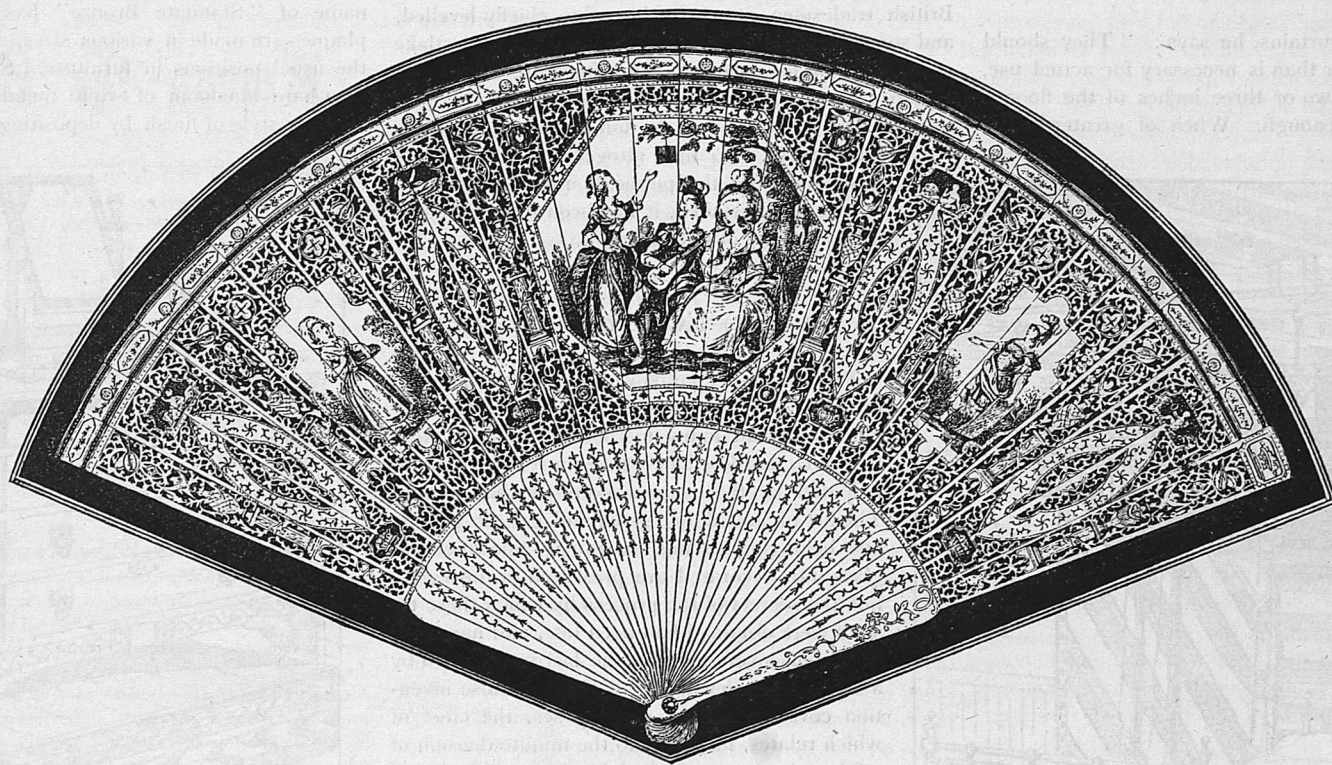
At first the young uncle and his mother endeavored to do what they could to draw the heir and his mother to them, and, promising to forget all past errors, offered to receive her into the family, and to make no opposition to the child's succession. But before very long curious rumors reached them. They made inquiries, which were attended with great expense, and led to nothing. By degrees, however, one little circumstance after another accumulated till they were able to take a decisive step. They boldly challenged the paternity of the child, and refused to acknowledge it or its mother.

Legal proof was still difficult to obtain. It was obtained at last, however, and by a mere accident. The child was proved to be the offspring of a washerwoman; and though the marriage was never called in question, it is said that the witnesses to it were no more to be believed than those who testified to the birth of the false heir.

A more romantic story has seldom been told in the law courts. The general public were greatly entertained. But the bill had to be paid, and of that the

public knew nothing. A great deal of money had been spent or was owed, and the new baronet's success seemed to have been purchased at a cost which would keep him poor all his life.

But it so happened that shortly after these events a man of taste, who was well acquainted with certain branches of art and archæology, was staying in the house. And one day the unfortunate young heir showed him a great boxful of old curiosities—coins, let us say. "They were gathered by my great-grandfather, and are of



LOUIS XVI. FAN. IN THE MYLIUS COLLECTION AT GENOA.

only son did not get on with his stepmother. He was wild, and would not be restrained. She had a large family in the course of time; and the stepson, having gone on from bad to worse, died in miserable circumstances, into which we need not pry farther than to say that, immediately after his death, the old baronet had a letter acquainting him with the fact that his son had married just before his death, and that the widow hoped shortly to present him with a grandchild.

Knowing, as he too well did, the kind of female company into which his prodigal son habitually entered, the old man was terribly shocked at the news. His second wife's eldest boy was a good lad, and was likely to be a comfort to himself and a credit to his family. But if this woman should have a son then all would go into her control, and the result probably would be the utter ruin of his ancient family. So much did these apprehensions distress him that he died a very few months after his eldest son. Almost at the same time the widow wrote to say she was the mother of a boy. The consternation in the family may be imagined. The young mother had taken care to provide for all possible contingencies. There were witnesses to the marriage and to everything. And though the witnesses chiefly

all ages and kinds. Do you think they would be worth selling? They did not cost much, for my ancestor never had much money to spend." The connoisseur looked over them for a few minutes. There were a great number, most of them worthless. But presently he jumped up with an exclamation. "This must be a forgery," he cried. "The only known example is in the Museum, they gave a thousand pounds for it, and it should be worth more now." He had two or three more surprises, and finally determined to take the whole boxful to town and show them to an expert.

When the box of coins had been thoroughly ransacked, about four hundred were found to be of great value. Of these two hundred were at once bought for a great public collection at an immense price, as it seemed to their owner, and the rest were sent to a saleroom. There they brought such a sum as, added to that obtained from the museum, paid off all the costs of the lawsuit, and enabled the young baronet to start in life out of debt from that cause at least. From this may be drawn the safe moral that if you collect what may seem common enough now, a few years hence your grandchildren may have cause to bless you.

It may of course be objected that collecting is not in

itself the practice of art. But except for people who are actually artists, much that goes to make home beautiful must of necessity be obtained by judicious collecting. It might easily be proved that articles which are really beautiful owe their chief attraction to the sense of suitability and permanent value which is required to make them satisfactory. But, further than this, it may fairly be argued that it is the duty of every one who is so fortunate as to possess a home and to be the head of a family to endeavor, so far as he can, to make his family happy by making his home beautiful.

A LOUIS XVI. FAN.

WE have written so recently at length on the subject of fans that in introducing to the notice of our readers the delicately pierced ivory fan of our illustration, it is only necessary to remark that it is from the celebrated collection of Mylius in Genoa, and is an admirable souvenir of the luxurious court of Louis XVI. It will be noticed that notwithstanding the necessary minuteness of the details of the decoration as they appear in our reproduction, every object contained in it is remarkably well defined.

SAN DONATO TREASURES IN AMERICA.

SOME of the choicest objects of art in the recent San Donato collection were sold to come to this country. We are indebted to the correspondent of The New York Times, Mr. James Jackson Jarves, through whose instrumentality most of the American purchases were made, for the following interesting details concerning them: A private house in New York is to receive the reduced repetition in bronze made many years since by Barbedienne of Paris, of the Ghiberti doors of the Baptistery of Florence—those famous gates of Paradise, as Michael Angelo pertinently called them. They cost Prince Demidoff in England \$20,000, and it took three years to make them. He used them as the entrance to his Gobelin tapestried concert-room, formerly the chapel of his palace. The present owners intend having them gilded, as their originals were, the traces of the gold, after more than four centuries' wear, being still plainly discernible on them. America will also possess some of the finest specimens of the celebrated old Vienna porcelain, the making of which has been discontinued by the Austrian Government on account of its expense. The remarkable dinner-service, made up of 107 pieces, decorated with copies of the most celebrated of the old masters of the Belvedere Gallery, beautifully executed, and which cost the prince \$35,000—for one dish alone he paid \$3300—was sold by the piece at a very great sacrifice, not a third of the original price. The famous Rubens plate goes to a small country town in Pennsylvania, and not a few pieces of this renowned collection, with choice old bits of Sèvres and Saxon of the best periods of the last century, will decorate New World homes which hitherto have seen nothing of this select character.

Few probably are aware of the prices paid by European collectors for rare specimens of Sèvres and Saxon porcelains, simply on account of some delicate quality of the decoration or paste. Three small flower-vases of the blue turquoise tint, fan-shaped, painted by Dodin in 1758, sold for \$19,000, and immediately after were resold at an advance of \$3000. The Sèvres snuff-box, No. 476 of the San Donato catalogue, painted after a design by Boucher, was eagerly acquired, at the price of \$6000, by Baron Rothschild. These values, it is true, are exceptionally fictitious, and are the result of the competition of a few avid collectors, who are willing to pay any price to secure some very rare or choice specimens of certain old workmanship in some fashionable line of the minor arts. When Americans fairly enter the European field of bric-à-brac competition, we may see even more extravagant prices paid, simply for the pride of ownership, irrespective of absolute artistic values.

A mahogany secretary of the time of Louis XVI., ornamented with finely-cut gilt bronzes, by the celebrated Gouthière, which came from the historical château of Vaux-Praslin, and cost the prince \$2400, goes, with a set of furniture once used by Napoleon I., bearing his imperial eagles, to adorn the rooms of a young gentle-

man's country seat in Pennsylvania. He secured, also, the gold-mounted knife, spoon, and fork, with the initials of Marie Antoinette, of France, which she had given to one of the ladies of her household. Several of the most interesting of the Napoleon relics were also obtained by him, particularly the silver with the imperial arms, long in use in the emperor's campaigns; the official autograph of Bonaparte while in Egypt, attached to an army dispatch; the ribbon decorations of the Legion of Honor constantly worn by the emperor, which were given by him to his brother Jerome, who bequeathed them and the other family relics to his daughter, the Princess Mathilde. On her marrying Anatole Demidoff they became his property, and now the Princess Mathilde has had the mortification of seeing all the family souvenirs of her great uncle and little father sold at auction to the highest bidder. The same young American also acquired the beautiful bracelet of the Queen of Westphalia, Jerome Bonaparte's wife, formed of precious stones composing an acrostic, giving her name and the date of her birth, 1783, and with it the costly travelling case, furnished with everything necessary for the toilette, mounted in gold, ornamented with the imperial eagles and bees, containing secret places for papers, which was given in 1810 by the queen to the king, with their initials interlaced in gold. This case can only be opened by a person knowing the secret of its ingenious and beautiful workmanship, which is a masterpiece of the time.

As a whole, the low prices obtained for the Napoleon relics at San Donato were a suggestive indication of the altered fortunes of the Bonapartes and the changed public opinion in regard to the family since the fall of the second empire. Nevertheless, a milk tooth of the great emperor, mounted in gold, a gift from Mme. Lœtitia to Jerome, found a buyer at 150 francs, and a lock of his hair, in a medallion, brought 140 francs. The hair of Joseph Bonaparte, in a gold locket, was considered only worth 20 francs, and that of the Princess Julia no more than 15 francs. In short, all the souvenirs of the Bonaparte family, except of the first emperor, sold for scarcely the value of their settings. The life-size statue, in marble, of Mme. Lœtitia, by Canova, taken as a Roman matron, a superb work of art, was knocked down for \$1200, and one of heroic size, of the emperor, for \$800. Marble busts of other members of the family were sold from \$20 to \$50 apiece, scarcely the cost of the crude material. But that of the empress Josephine, by Giolli, rose to \$600, and one by Canova, of Pauline Bonaparte, for her beauty, found an admirer at \$1100.

A rich store of magnificent ecclesiastical embroideries, dalmatiques, chasubles, and altar-fronts, of Italian and Spanish make, and other objects in gold and velvet, curtains and table-covers, some from the Fortuny collection, with some of the most remarkable specimens of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, German repoussé silver work, ebony inlaid cabinets, and superb renaissance bronzes, which put out of countenance all modern work, and will serve for the standard of excellence so much needed by us in our incipient arts, are also coming to America. It is to be hoped that their various new proprietors will place them from time to time where they will "do the most good"—that is, in the loan exhibitions now in vogue.

At least one good genuine specimen of Luca della Robbia's work, "La Vierge au Coussin," surrounded by a wreath of fruits and leaves, in color, in his usual fashion, comes to New York. It will be found illustrated on another page. But perhaps the most interesting of all the relics, from its associations with Louis XVI., which hereafter finds its new home in our country, is the charming iron music-stand, of hammered and repoussé work, which was designed by the king, while he was dauphin, as a present to Marie Antoinette, and is so lovely a specimen of fine taste and workmanship as to clearly prove that the unfortunate monarch missed his "mission" when he fatally played at kingcraft instead of becoming a bona fide artisan, and saving his head.

One of the results of this sale obviously will be, in America, to stimulate the acquisition of really tasteful and artistic objects, and the formation of special collections of various kinds, which will greatly aid both the growing taste of our people for fine art and the industrial development of the arts which cater to a highly-cultivated taste. In this way the sale at San Donato becomes for America a marked event, a fresh starting-point in its incipient career in this important direction.

SALE OF ART FURNITURE.

SOME very fine art furniture in the style of Chippendale, Sheraton, and Adams, mostly reproductions from old examples, was sold lately in London. A satinwood wardrobe, banded with tulipwood, ornamented with fluted and reeded columns with vases on the top, sold for 162 pounds 15 shillings; a commode, in black shell and boule, inlaid with colored work and with ormolu mounts, a good specimen of the period of Louis XIII., 78 pounds 15 shillings; a library table, in black boule work mounted in ormolu, designed by Berian, 42 pounds; an old English pedestal sideboard, in mahogany, inlaid with satinwood, 58 pounds 16 shillings; a pair of pier tables, in satinwood, fluted legs, ormolu mounts and marble tops, 48 pounds; and old English bookcase, with trellis doors, 74 pounds 11 shillings; a sideboard, in mahogany, with pedestals, chased ormolu mountings and gallery, in the style of Louis XVI., 262 pounds 10 shillings; a pair of dinner wagons, 126 pounds; a pair of pier tables of mahogany, with chased ormolu mounts and marble tops, style of Louis XVI., 131 pounds 5 shillings; a pair of fine old black boule terms, with chased Goutier mounts, designed by Berian, 210 pounds; a carved mahogany sideboard, designed by Adams, with pedestals and brass rail with sconces, 105 pounds; a pair of side tables of satinwood and hawwood, inlaid with marqueterie from subjects by Angelica Kauffman, musical trophies on fluted legs, gilt, 210 pounds; a chimney glass in carved satinwood frame, 78 pounds 10 shillings; a satinwood cabinet, inlaid with marqueterie, the panels decorated with subjects after Angelica Kauffman, 294 pounds.

Among the Dealers.

A remarkably well-decorated plaque by Poitevin fils, showing a lady in mediæval costume, is among the attractions of the show-windows of Messrs. Schneider, Campbell & Co.

The finest collection of Japanese snuff bottles ever seen in this country, bought not long ago by Messrs. Watson & Co., of Union Square, New York, is to go to Europe for sale, there being no one on this side of the Atlantic, apparently, disposed to buy them. The collection consists of 240 pieces, and really ought to find a place in a museum. It includes bottles of amethyst, agate, tortoise-shell, rock crystal, dark and light cut glass, enamel and porcelain, including rare green crackle.

The curious new building opposite the Nineteenth Street side of Arnold, Constable & Co.'s establishment has appropriately become the home of the rare Spanish antiques and bric-à-brac of Mr. John Chadwick. This dealer has founded here a veritable Hispano-Moresque museum. Besides a fine display of decorative tiles suggestive of the Alhambra, the Alcazar, and still more ancient sources of inspiration, there are some of the rarest mediæval tapestries and embroidered hangings to be found in this country. A high altar-piece we noticed there, said to be from the cathedral in Toledo, would make a very artistic covering for four chair backs, and a richly embroidered velvet "reposteros"—such as are still hung from balconies in Spain on fête days—with a little ingenuity could be converted into a unique portière. Occupying a prominent place in Mr. Chadwick's rooms is a superb faience vase nearly six feet high, which, in spite of its great size, he has managed to bring home perfectly sound from Paris. The piece is charmingly painted by Coutourier, with a cock, hen, and peacock, on one side, and guinea fowls on the other. Probably it is the largest vase of its kind ever brought to America.

A CURIOUS and valuable collection of early Italian majolica, numbering some twenty pieces, mostly of the sixteenth century, is on view at the rooms of Messrs. Moore & Curtis. It includes a large Caffagillo plaque with iridescent lustre, some gubbio plaques with the peculiar gold lustre of their kind, and a large and very interesting plaque of the Siculo-Moresque period. These rare specimens would find their proper place in the museum cabinet, where they could be studied by the students of ceramics for their strength and beauty of form, appropriate ornament, and harmony of color. There is in them none of the prettiness of modern finish, nor the expressionless accuracy of form to which the machinery of our day familiarizes us, but the artist recognizes at a glance at these ancient pieces the dexterity and cunning of the fingers that moulded the clay, and the sure touch of the master decorator who boldly sketched the outlines of the human figure or filled in the delicate and elegant arabesques. At the rooms of Messrs. Moore & Curtis we also notice a goodly array of Oriental porcelain in solid colors, including some fine pieces in the pale apple greens and rare yellows much prized by connoisseurs.